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The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

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FEBRUARY 1993

I HAVE SPREAD OUT MY HANDS UNTO A REBELLIOUS PEOPLE (Isaiah 65:2)



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FEBRUARY 1993

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25 Years Ago!

The Church has not yet worked out its theology or its mission of peace making. Early in its history it faced the fundamental problems of its faith and message; then it tackled problems of suffering, ignorance and slavery; in modern times it has re-discovered its world-wide mission of evangelism; somewhat belatedly it has come to grips with the economic implications of the Gospel; but the question of peace making on a world scale has hardly been brought into clear focus.

—Churchman, 1957

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WATCH AND PRAY



Tolerance the basic tenet for peaceful coexistence has taken back seat. This goes to prove that there is no place where one could find harmony and real progress. It is a transient phase, but in this span of time there has been severe suffering and the brunt has been taken by the innocent women and the children.

Civil wars compounded by the religio-ethnic conflicts and riots are being continued and dominating the global scene. Future, as it appears, is going to be more violent and chaotic.

Violent breakup of Yugoslavia, the raging civil war in Somalia, the emerging new form of ethnicity in U.S.S.R. (once), the armed struggle in Angola, the gruesome killings in Sri Lanka, war in Iraq and the never-ending exploitation and the political suppression in South Africa present a grim picture of the today's world. The condition of Somalia is worst. The entire state is submerged in anarchy. It is estimated that nearly 3,00,000 people have died of starvation and hunger. Angola witnessed the killing of 3,50,000 people during its 16 year-long civil war. The nine year ethnic war has claimed nearly 33,000 lives in Sri Lanka. Every new day takes a worse turning. Going by the indications of the last year, it can be said that 1993 would witness more intensified struggle for existence.

India is no better. The threat to practising diverse religions looms large. The appreciation of each other's way of life is missing. The atmosphere which is now prevailing is sorrowful, tense and depressing. What happened

in Bombay, Delhi and in Gujarat after the Ayodhya incident, showed us that people ceased to be friendly as they gave in to sheer madness. The bonds of friendship which kept the two communities and the others united for decades in a cordial and cosmopolitan atmosphere lay shattered.

President Shankar Dayal Sharma on the eve of Republic Day asked the people to choose between two prospects, one based on understanding and accommodation and the other on strife and hate. Making an emotional appeal to the people to cooperate in fulfilling a 'creative agenda' for a new India at peace with herself and true to her time-tested ethical and moral values, the President said that the recent riots and violence were the proof of the inevitable consequences of communalism. He rightly pointed out that almost all our problems had resulted from inadequacies or failures in availing of the wisdom of our constitutional thought, because the ethos that sustained India over thousands of years found expression in the Constitution. Because of this failure, India stood today at the cross-roads of history. It is true that communalism poses a devastating threat to every individual and every sector.

There are other areas which are equally alarming ; crimes against dalits, for instance, are on the rise. Crimes including rape, murder and assault against the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are on the increase. In the first six months of 1992, 257 cases of Harijan women being raped have been registered. Around 160 cases of murder and 350 of grievous hurt have also been filed. Overall, there has been a 25% increase in such crimes. Violence

against the weaker sections particularly against women exists in all parts of the society, in all the countries. Every year two to three million U.S. women suffer violence or death threats from their husbands. If we count our numbers of such violence, the dowry deaths and the bridal burnings, the figures will be mind-boggling. Adding to this is the child prostitution perpetuated through the tourism in Asia. The placards, exhibited by the children in Bangkok with the appeal, 'Go back to your countries and tell tourists not to come to our country to exploit us', give us ample proof of the sinful nature of the world.

These are the most uncomfortable days. The pathetic state of affairs and highly inflammable situation prevailing in our country could be attributed to the phenomenal increase in fundamentalism. The evil influence of a handful politicians and the dubious mentality of a few leaders is the root cause which aggravates the situation. This has to be atoned. It is the time for introspection, to look inward to discover what exactly is wrong with us and how best we can help in easing the situation.

Today we are treading upon a dangerous path full of uncertainties and imponderables but our faith in the Lord

and Saviour Jesus Christ should not become weak. On the other hand it should strengthen us and make us to say 'Though the fig tree do not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food... Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. God, the Lord, is my strength....' (Habakkuk 3, 17-19).

We are perturbed, perhaps spending sleepless nights. But let us be clear in our minds: Jesus had predicted all these and even warned us against such happenings. 'Take heed that no one leads you astray. And when you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is not yet... this is but the beginning of the suffering... The gospel must first be preached to all nations... And then they will see the son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory... Take heed, watch and pray... what I say to you I say to all... (Mark 13).

Yes, we are asked to watch and pray. Pray without ceasing.

—DASS BABU

FLASH

CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA CENTRE

New building dedicated on 9th of February '93

The Church of South India Centre was dedicated and declared open by the Moderator, the Most Rev. Vasant P. Dandin on February 9, 1993. It was a glorious event witnessed by the representatives of several Christian organisations and Ecumenical agencies in Madras besides the Working Committee members and delegates from the twenty one dioceses of the CSI. The occasion was graced by all the Bishops and also some retired Bishops who had come for the annual Bishops' Retreat.

—Details in March issue.

Inculturation of the Gospel in India

REV. JUSTIN CHARLES, *Trivandrum*

Edwardo Hooimaert, in his book 'The Memory of the Christian People', warns of a possible dying out of the Church, giving the example of the extinction of Nubian Christendom sometime between 14th and 15th centuries of the Christian era. Due to the lack of popular acceptance, the Church could not take deep roots in the reality of the Ethiopian nation. The Church could not survive as the Gospel did not identify itself with the life context of the people. The example of the Nubian Christendom reminds those who are involved in the great task of formulating a new theological thought should have a clear understanding of the culture, experience and life situation of the people to whom that theology has to be presented. Also in this context it should be taken into consideration that theologizing should never be an intellectual exercise. It is with this understanding that we should analyse the process of inculturation of the Gospel that the Indian Church had been witnessing so far.

Indian theological thought during the last one hundred years had undergone changes at different periods. It appears that various experiments had been carried out to develop an Indian Christian Theology worth to its name. It raises a question as to why various changes had to take place in the theological thinking of the Indian Christian leaders.

Both the writers of the biblical books and the later theologians had specially taken note of the context of their audience. The formulators of Mingung Theology of Korea, Liberation Theology of Latin America, and Black Theology had each a definite context. For example, the context set in motion for the theologians of Latin America to formulate the Liberation Theology was the pathos of the people of the land. The main issue was faith and life. Christianity was the cause of pain, sorrow, suffering and inequality as far as Latin America was concerned. As in the case of Goa the colonial powers used Christianity and exploited the faith of the innocent natives of Latin America. They lost their land and wealth. They were dehumanized by oppression and exploitation. Though later they achieved independence the basic imbalance in all aspects remained the same. Their long suffering and dehumanization compelled them to ask as to what the meaning of salvation and liberation was, and if the theology in existence could do anything to make people hopeful of the future. Their main concern was the life here and now, and liberation from pain and suffering. It was from this context that the Theology of Liberation had been evolved. The Latin American experiment ascertains that any will be able to create an impact only when that theology identifies itself with the life situation of the people.

In this context we are faced with certain questions. How far has the process of construction of an Indian

Christian Theology been developed? Can any one claim to have developed a theological thought in the Indian context? Over the years the Indian Church had witnessed the emergence of different theological systems. It is a fact that none of these systems could create an impressive impact on the Indian mass. The main reason is the wide gap between these theologies and the people, because those who developed the theological thoughts did not take the context of the people into consideration. As the Indian theological thinkers like Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya, Keshub Chandra Sen, Chakkarai, Chenchiah, and Appasami were from Hindu background influenced by brahmanism the context set before them was Hindu faith and practices. By identifying Christianity with certain elements of Hinduism thinking that Indian culture was closely linked with Hinduism, they were under the impression that the process of inculturation of Christ had taken a definite Indian shape. According to Brahmabandhav one did not have to give up one's Hindu identity in order to become a Christian. He held the view that one could culturally remain a Hindu while being committed to the Gospel of Christ. Further he said, 'We are Hindus so far our physical and mental constitution is concerned, but in regard to our immortal soul we are Catholics. We are Hindu Catholics'. Its influence was limited to the theological colleges and the elitist circles, otherwise the new trend had to face stiff resistance from the common people as it was irrelevant to their situation hence meaningless to them. They interpreted that as Christianity had once been imposed on them due to the need of the prevailing circumstances, the new thought, though unwanted, was yet another imposition on them.

An important question is raised in this context. What was the problem with this type of inculturation? The main concern of the so-called Indian Christian Theology was to reveal to the Indian mind who God was and what God was from their Hindu background. But, on the other hand the people were in search of a God and continued to ask where God was. They were the untouchables, the dehumanized section created by Hindu Varnashrama dharma. It was their age old suffering and oppression and the consequent marginalization that prompted them to discard the religion of their oppressors. To submit themselves to that theology was to disown their hard earned freedom and justice. To find a place for Gita in Church services, to honour Siva Linga giving christian significance, and to celebrate Hindu festivals giving Christian meaning are all sacrilege according to them. From this it becomes clear that this new thought had had no impact on Hindus even. As it was philosophical and scholastic it was unintelligible to the common man. Therefore this theology remained to be an intellectual feat without having any impact on other intellectuals. This failure has its own parallel to the failure of Robert de Nobili in 'Indianizing' Christianity a few centuries ago

It is plain that the new development in christian thought did not have the desired effect as far as Christianity is concerned, but on the contrary it provoked Hinduism to revive itself once again. The Hindu organizations like Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Hindu Munnani and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad are the products of such revival.

By the late 1960's the Indian Christian social thinkers began to be aware of the need for an interpretation of the Gospel in terms of the christian concern in the struggle for liberation from different forms of oppression. It became apparent that the Church had a commitment to society in the concrete situations of struggle for justice, liberation and human dignity. Therefore the theological thinking in India should be closely linked to the human situation in terms of social, political and economic realities. According to Saral K. Chatterjee, 'it is within these historical, social, economic and political experiences of the people that we have to seek the seeds of transcendence ... the response of human beings to the salvation offered to them in Christ Jesus.' Here we can come to an assumption that in their attempt to construct a theology of liberation in the Indian context, the Indian Christian social thinkers like Devanandan, M. M. Thomas, and Felix Wilfred were greatly influenced by Marxist ideologies, Latin American Theology of Liberation, and the much studied and discussed Social Gospel propounded by Walter Rauschenbush. It shows that there was a shift of emphasis in the Indian theological thought after 1960. But, though they tried to find out an answer to the question where God was and took the life situation and plight of the poor seriously, it does not appear that the Church had gone deeper enough to dig out the root cause of a section of the society being marginalized. Here also the propounders of theology happened to be the ones who did not have the living experience of the poorest of the poor on earth.

Now the tendency to acknowledge and appropriate the Hindu philosophic concepts in Christianity has been abandoned. There is emerging a new thought against this tendency because they argue that it was the Brahmanical culture that enslaved other cultures. They wonder how the oppressors' culture could be used for the liberation of the oppressed. The spokesmen of this new movement are the Dalits of India—the crushed ones, the 'no people' of India. They believe that social change cannot be brought about merely by political activities, but before taking any step of that kind, people should be conscientised first. 'Dalit consciousness' is an integral part of 'dalit power'. This consciousness consists in becoming aware that dalit humanity is constituted by their dalitness. Therefore it can be argued that their 'dalitness' in fact helps them to look back into their history, their culture, their civilization and their greatness. Their dalitness helps them to be aware of their superiority to the so-called superior people. They are now celebrating their cultural identity with their folk arts, rejecting Sanskritic cultural captivity. It was this consciousness that led the Christian dalits to examine their position within the Church which once was a source of consolation, comfort and liberation. In the 'Studies in Missionary History', S. Manickam establishes the fact that Dalit Christians are an estranged community in the sense that they are twice alienated, twice marginalized and twice out-caste, once by Aryan Hindu community and consequently by an unfriendly government, and again by the unredeemed caste-minded christian community. In this context one might ask as to what response the Church has given to the dalit problem. Manickam is right when he says, 'we do not know from where would help come for the Christian dalits. One

thing is clear and certain that it would not come from their oppressors, and so they should work out their own salvation.' This reveals a fact that the Church has so far not done anything concrete to show its solidarity with these powerless people in their struggle for survival. It was their unending pathos that prepared the context for a new set of theologians to develop a theological thought—the Dalit Theology—relevant to the context of the people.

According to M. E. Prabhakar, 'it is a people's theology, a particular people's theology, i.e. that of the dalits, therefore, a theology of the dalits, by the dalits, for the dalits'. Abraham Ayrookuzhiel says, 'dalit theology, from a cultural point of view, stands for the sum of dalit meanings, expectations, and understandings in relation to their experience of social reality and their perceptions of what it is to lead an authentic human experience'. This means that Dalit Theology is not a product of some elites sitting at a distance and creating something from their intellectual faculty, rather it is done by the dalits and the message is exclusively meant for a particular people. Only then will it be meaningful to them. Therefore, the context for theologizing is their life experience, i.e. their struggles, their failures and successes, their hopes and their comradeship with the people of other faith and ideologies. To this effect A.P. Nirmal says that 'the basis of the theological construction of that theology will be the dalit experiences of historical sufferings, aspirations and hopes.' He further goes on to say that the new theology will narrate the story of sufferings and pathos of the dalits. The liberation that is dalit within it will be meaningful to their contexts.

It appears that the Dalit Theology as it is seen in its present shape and form is emphatically exclusive in nature. They claim that 'GOD' is exclusively a God of the dalits, and that God has a preferential option for them. This is very much nearer to the Judaistic understanding of the relationship between God of Israel, who regarded God as the God of the Jews and themselves as the chosen race. As is narrated in the Book of Deuteronomy 26:7-12, the dalits too have their nomadic and exodus experiences. When compared to the nomadic experience of the Israelites, the sufferings and pathos of the dalits are greater and deeper. The exodus experience is not merely a gain of freedom or simply a release from oppression and exploitation. It is something more than that. The exodus is to a state of realization of their full humanness, or conversely their full divinity—the image of God in them, i.e. the goal of the Dalit Theology is the 'glorious liberty of the Children of God'. Dalits believe that the glory of God had been manifested or displayed through them. God never revealed his name to anyone in any context other than to the marginalized, oppressed and powerless in their context of liberation. This shows that God has a preferential option for the poor, the powerless, crushed and oppressed—the dalits—because brokenness itself belongs to the very being of God. He is one with the broken. As Israel were once 'no people', the dalits in the eyes of their oppressors and mighty are 'no people'. But after their freedom from the Pharaoh as they became the real people, God's own people, the dalits become the real people, God's very own people when they are liberated and full humanity is attained in Christ. The attainment of this fullness is the dalit hope.

Indian theological scene for the last one century had been very active in formulating and reformulating theo-

(Continued on Page 7)

Mission and Development-Identity and Stewardship

REV. DR. CHRISTOPHER SUGDEN

The Distortion of Stewardship

The stewardship of the world was to be a partnership between Adam and Eve, and God and the creation. The Fall spoiled all these relationships. The partnership was cursed. Relationships between men and women were spoilt. Man's work, instead of being a means by which he could be fulfilled, became a means by which he was exploited and exploited others. Resources meant to benefit people were often devoted to their destruction.

These distortions of stewardship have meant that people have often seen no connection between their Christian lives and their work. Work involves all sorts of difficulties, compromises and suffering. Christ is seen only as one who brings relief and release from that. Christian lives and the work of the Church are seen as confined to spiritual activities. Stewardship is seen as confined to Christian giving.

The concept of image and stewardship is relational. So the result of the Fall was that these relationships are now asked and misdirected. Instead of being rightly related to God, one another and the earth, as those who fulfil God's purpose, all humanity's relationships are spoilt.

Relationships with God Spoilt

Humanity's relationships with God were spoilt. Instead of worshipping a being greater than themselves, people began to idolise the creation of their own hands. Instead of being stewards, people began to worship what they produced rather than the one who had given them the resources with which to work. Such idolatry dehumanises people. People become slaves to work, to institutions, to production processes, to performance figures.

Relationships with Others Spoilt

The corruption of the relationship with God is integral to the corruption of relationships with others. There is the breakdown of relationship between man and woman. Instead of being man's companion and helper, woman becomes his possession.

Instead of being brothers and sisters, people become enemies. The story of Cain and Abel has to do with resources; with God's approval of their actions, and with violence between them. Cain demands more than his rightful share of what God gives, he demands that the approval from God should be entirely his. He grabs. Violence follows.

Instead of being partners together, people seek to exercise over each other that dominion which was granted to humanity only over nature. So Pharaoh exercised dominion over the Hebrew slaves, men exercise dominion over women; Jesus characterised the rulers of the world as those who exercise dominion over people (Mark 10:40).

Jesus said that such dominion should not characterise his disciples (and thus by implication all true humanity); rather they should be servants. In Romans 13, Paul said that rulership should be exercised as an attitude of servanthood for the good of the community.

Stewardship of the Earth Spoilt

The Fall hampered people's ability to be true stewards of the earth. In the beginning, nature and all natural resources co-operated with humanity in its stewardship. Humanity's work was meant to be a means of affirming and developing its role as the steward. But the Fall means that work has become a means whereby people's ability to be stewards is assaulted.

In contemporary society this happens in many ways. To what use are resources put? They are meant for the benefit of people. Too often they are used for armaments and other means of oppressing and destroying people. In what sense are factory workers stewards? They only process raw materials. How are those in contact with the earth's raw materials, and whose lives are in tune with nature, treated? Tribal peoples have their forest decimated and their lands expropriated. How do people view the use of resources? The ethos of commercial free enterprise is that people will only develop resources if they personally own them. This ethos acts against notions of common and shared stewardship.

These distortions of stewardship have a deep effect on people's lives, especially the lives of Christians because they can see no relation between God's call to stewardship and their own everyday work.

And the earth itself, instead of being plastic and pliable to humanity's use, becomes hard to till. People have to sweat and toil to bring forth its resources. Instead of nature being a willing partner in this task, nature becomes an enemy, something to which humanity becomes subject.

Christian teachers sometimes give the impression that the only relationship that matters which is infected by the corruption of the Fall is the relationship with God, and

that the other relationships are just consequences of that. However, the Fall actually shows that all humanity's relationships are corrupted together. The corruption of the relationships between people is an expression of the corruption of the relationship with God. The corruption of the relationship with the environment is an expression of the corruption of the relationship with God.

The Recovery of Our Stewardship in Christ

Jesus as the Steward

Jesus' role in the New Testament is sometimes not as the owner, but as the authentic steward. He desires nothing for himself. He is obedient to the one he represents. He does what he sees his Father doing. He gives gifts to humanity.

We are taken up into Jesus' stewardship as the Second Adam. Jesus is the initiator and enabler of Christian stewardship. Jesus is not just the model of stewardship, it is into his stewardship that we are initiated.

Paul teaches that Christ is the true image of God, and that in him believers are conformed to the image of God's Son (Roman 8:29). This means that stewardship is the context for our Christian discipleship. Our Christian discipleship is to be expressed in our stewardship. The working out of our salvation should include the demonstration of its recovery of our responsibility for creation. So our salvation actually is tied to the proper exercise of our role as stewards of creation. The image of God will only be truly recreated in us when we are enabled to exercise our calling as stewards of God.

Part of our expression of salvation in this world should therefore involve work in enabling people to recover their position as stewards, as managers. We should enable people and communities to be stewards and not merely receivers of aid. All who are responsible for the stewardship of creation should also receive the fruits of creation, not as beggars through charity but as a result of their stewardship. Therefore a proper exercise of Christian stewardship is to enable other people to attain their proper role as stewards, receiving the fruits of creation through their work and stewardship.

John Mason has shown in an examination of the support for the poor in the Old Testament how the major form of support for able-bodied people was loans to enable them to resume work. 'Welfare' as such was only for those unable to work. The concern was to release people from dependency and enable them to be stewards.

One important way of doing this that has been developing in recent years is the whole concern to build up families through enabling employment through microbusiness enterprise. But this must be seen within the context of the concern to develop people's identity as stewards and to address many of the aspects of the culture of poor people which inhibit stewardship. For this is not just the espousal of capitalism as a means of overcoming poverty, it is the acceptance that some principals of the free market do faithfully express some of the Christian concern for the identity, dignity and stewardship of the poor, but it is not to espouse the capitalist system wholesale.

The gospel of stewardship begins by overcoming that within us that prevents us from being stewards—the

pride of imagining ourselves as owners; the sloth of irresponsibility and neglect—and given us the grace we need to show a love of the world that is bigger than our self-esteem (we own it) or our anxiety (we are totally responsible).

The fulfillment of Stewardship

The Old Testament vision of the fulfillment of God's purposes for people in stewarding the creation was of a new heaven and a new earth. The earth is an integral part of the vision of God's final purposes.

Isaiah 65:17 speaks of 'the new heaven and the new earth I am making'. His prophecy also has a vision of the desert blooming, of water springing up in the wilderness, and of the crops bringing forth fruit one-thousand-fold.

The Book of Revelation has a vision of the kings of the earth bringing their treasures into the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21:22). The end of the story of the earth is not the scrap-heap, or Earth abandoned in favour of heaven, but of the fulfilment of humanity's stewardship transformed by the power of God.

Implications for Christian Mission

This means that the work of enabling people to regain their positions as stewards of creation, rather than remain mere receivers or consumers, actually enables God's purpose for humanity to be fulfilled.

In seeking to restore the relationships between people and their resources, and between people and people (both within two-thirds-world countries and between western and two-thirds-world countries), the work of Christian mission is expressing the reversal of the Fall. Such work is only possible finally because of the work of Christ. But in expressing the reversal of the Fall in this way, the work of Christian mission is pointing up the integral effects of human sin in distorting all people's relationships, demonstrating the nature of a right relationship with God in restoring stewardship and showing the necessity of a relationship with Christ so that people be servants of each other, and especially of the poor, rather than exercising dominion over each other.

This work is not a 'second-class' Christian work to open the way for evangelism; it is itself demonstrating the nature of sin, the nature of God's redeeming of creation, and pointing out the need for allegiance to Christ.

The work of enabling people to be stewards will not be finally frustrated because that work will be transformed in the final new heaven and new earth.

Jesus taught how stewardship is to be exercised in the use of the talents (Matthew 25:14-46). The steward or servant who risked his talents to make 10 more is given greater responsibility to manage larger amounts. The parable is then followed by the judgement of the nations, where those who have served Jesus faithfully are those who have ministered to the poor, hungry and imprisoned. How do we serve this master who has entrusted us with these talents? We serve him by ministering to the poor and the dispossessed to enable them to become stewards.

This gives important guidelines to Christian organisations engaged in development. Are they enabling

the poor among whom they minister to become stewards—to have access to resources and to be human beings? It combats the oppression and dependency to which they, as the poor, are so often subject.

Are Christian organisations creating that partnership between the rich and the poor which enables those with 10 talents to truly facilitate the hungry and the naked—not just by passing on their money which often keeps them dependent, but by passing on the skills of stewardship which the poor need?

Christian mission agencies engaged in development are thus signs of the activity of the Kingdom of God as they enable poor people to be true stewards of creation; as they enable them to combat the dependency that they are forced into; as they enable them to overcome the victim mentality and discover the reality of the present victory in Christ; as they build up a sense of community that breaks down barriers—especially concentrating on that building block of the community in Israel, the family; as they enable family units to be stewards.

Empowerment

This ministry is one of empowerment that enables people to express their calling to be stewards of the creation but the source of this empowerment is not in the

poor's sense of deprivation or victimisation. It is in Christ as people turn to him, the true Son of God, who enables us to be stewards in the right relationships which he has restored with God, other people and the creation and the true servant who showed that the true use of power was in empowering and serving the powerless, not in lording it over them. That is why I have stressed the basis of identity in God's grace in Christ. That is why Christian organisations engaged in development have such a crucial role to play. That is why their Christian calling and witness is so fundamental.

This aspect of empowerment is an important criterion for evaluating other aspects of the Christian development organisation's work and ministry. Does it empower its own staff? Does it build empowering relations with organisations and groups with which it is in relationship? What are the models of relationships that it has with those who are poor and with those who provide their resources? Do these relationships affirm mutuality and empowerment or is there a false equation in which one disempowers another?

What about the patterns of leadership and leadership development? Do these empower others? Do they follow the servant-leadership model of Jesus which was a model that empowered others?

(Continued from Page 4)

logical thoughts as the prevailing contexts demanded. As Christianity was regarded as the religion of the Imperial powers and a western import in India, the necessity was to make Christianity Indian. Inculturation of the Gospel in that context was felt to be a necessity for the Church's survival. In the process of acknowledging the Hindu concepts as realities and appropriate them in Christian theology had to face challenges from both the Hindu revivalist groups and Christians themselves. The claim of this theology to be 'The Indian Christian Theology' is debatable as India cannot claim to have a particular culture of its own. India is a multi-linguistic, multi-racial, and multi-religious nation, hence a multi-cultural nation. As this is the case no one particular theology can be labelled as 'The Indian Christian Theology', rather it can well be called 'a theology in an Indian context'. The dalits, on the other hand, criticise the Christian leaders for compromising the Christian values and faith with an alien religion—the religion of their oppressors. Therefore they claim that Dalit Theology is the real Indian Christian Theology in its nature and context as it was constructed by the dalits, for the dalits, and a theology of the dalits—the descendents of the original inhabitants of India. This shows the importance of evangelizing in the language and culture of the people. Therefore it

should be remembered that the Gospel is not to be identified with an alien culture, but rather with the culture, world-views and experience of the real Indians who constitute a majority of the Indian Church. Only that theology constructed on this basis is a living theology and can truly claim to be an Indian theology.

Being a humble servant of the Lord in His vineyard and a researcher in historical studies I often ask as to what impacts all these developments in theology could make all these years. It should always be remembered that during the formative period of the establishment of the Church in India and when christian faith and practices were still in their western form the growth of the Church both numerically and spiritually was tremendous and that too among the unrecognized section of the society. If at all our statistics show of any growth thereafter, that also is among the dalits of India. It is not the magical influence of any theological system, whether the so-called Indian Christian Theology or Dalit Theology, that gave a boost to the growth, but the prevailing life experience of each person that compelled him to come to Jesus for consolation and liberation. Therefore, it is to this point that inculturation of the Gospel in India is to give primary importance.

Nurturing Peace with Justice in Family, Church and Society

REV. DR. ARUN GOPAL, *Madras**

India has been a peace loving country in the world. Religious and cultural pluralism and the call for national integration with communal harmony, are ample evidences for India's search for lasting peace. The recital of 'Om Santi' (an ancient prayer for peace), and the release of the white dove at public functions and ceremonies symbolise the commitment of India to peace and tranquility. The socio-economic reforms envisaged by the Five Year Plans, and the concessions given to the poorest of the poor in terms of educational and employment opportunities show the concern of the Indian government to eradicate poverty, and to establish a just society where holistic peace prevails.

I. Socio-Cultural understandings and practices of Shalom

It is interesting to note that holistic peace or peace with justice—Shalom, was a matter of concern for the Indian people many centuries ago, even during the Epic period. Besides the drama and sensation contained in the stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata, the ideas therein convey a clear concept of peace with justice. The suggestion that divine incarnations are intended to uphold righteousness in the society is contained in the glorification of a social order or a regime, such as 'Ram Raj.' Hence, Mahatma Gandhi visualised the independent India in terms of 'Ram Raj.'

Recognising the influence of religion over the thought forms and practices in the society, with a view to establish peace with justice several social reformers have been re-interpreting scriptures to critique the customs and practices in the society, from time to time. Thus, they were able to make way for widow remarriage, temple entry of untouchables, appointment of non-Brahmin priests and the liberation of community life from Brahminical domination in different parts of India. Even the freedom struggle and independence may be attributed to the religious and social reform movements to some degree. Of late there has been a fresh awakening among women, Dalits and Tribals to assert themselves and claim their rightful place in the society due to the efforts of many action-groups. Some of these groups are inspired by the liberation motifs present in secular ideologies, and movements in other parts of the world.

In the final analysis, Gandhiji's principle of 'Ahimsa' or non violence in some respects may be viewed as closer to the Christian understanding of Shalom, for its wider implications have to do with the establishment of a society, where there will be no exploitation of the weak and the marginalised.

A paper presented at the Christian Conference of Asia Regional Workshop on Education for Peace with Justice, Manila, Philippines in January 1993.

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II. Issues on peace with justice in the life of Family, Church and Society

(a) Family

Family is the microcosm of the society. The hierarchical pattern of relationships which characterise the Indian society are reflected in the families too. Women are regarded as inferior to men. There have been instances where the mother is denied entry into the house by her in-laws after delivery, when the first born child is a girl. Both in villages and cities there have been instances where the girl child is not allowed to pursue her studies beyond some limit, because it is not advantageous to her parents, in view of her exodus to the house of her husband or parents in law one day. Wife beating still continues in spite of her education, earnings and hard work at home.

Childhood is not a pleasant stage in many families. Poverty drives many children to work as domestic servants. With their feeble hands they are forced to do hard work, at times in hotels and factories too. Adult responses are expected from them in that stage of innocence. They are at times treated as little adults in their own homes. Broken families and harassment by stepmother or father cause much pain and agony to children. In villages and slums many children are not sent to schools by their parents. Instead the children are made to help their parents in the family trade. Specially girls often discontinue their studies, to take care of their younger brothers and sisters at home or to get married if they had attained puberty.

Joint family system is gradually giving way to the nuclear family pattern. Yet in some families the single member who earns has to support the aged parents, his/her unemployed brothers and sisters, besides the large number of children in the family. There have been instances where the aged parents are uncared, and even harassed. Wherever the joint family system still prevails it has served both good and bad purposes. Working parents are relieved of the responsibility of taking care of their children, because the grandparents do that job. On the other hand, several dowry-deaths are attributed to the ill-treatment meted out to the young brides by their mothers-in-law.

In India inter-caste marriages are much limited. During marriages parents of both the parties (girl and boy) assume much responsibility in making decisions, even about the choice of the bride or the groom. On many occasions it is the parents and other elders who discuss dowry matters. However, the pattern where the young people themselves make decisions independently is becoming popular in cities and towns. But there is resistance to that pattern from those of older generation, specially on account of money and social status which are involved in arranging marriages.

(b) Church

Church exists by its mission. Mission belongs to the whole People of God, who need to penetrate into the society to make Shalom a reality. In India, specially in the churches where there is a cadre of professionally trained full-time clergy, lay people regard themselves as being inadequate to give leadership in worship and preaching. In Church management also the ordained minister is the key figure. Thus, in a sense the clergy are the ruling elite in the Church. In some places talented and efficient pastors are given too many administrative responsibilities, so that they are not able to spend enough time with their congregation members to share their problems and agonies, and equip them for the ministries by which peace with justice may be accomplished in the society.

Many clergy and congregations are satisfied with their routine worship services and weekly programmes, and celebrations. The burning issues in the society do not bother them at all. The cries of the victims of injustice and suffering masses are not reflected in the worship to challenge the congregations. Parishners are satisfied with the symbolic responses made to express the solidarity of the Church with the poor, hungry and needy. Of course, the vast majority of the Church members are not affluent. Yet their zeal to give to the Church is much less than their zeal to receive from the Church. That shows the need to give further teaching on Christian stewardship, and motivate the congregations to offer their human and material resources to revitalise the Church to be an agent of Shalom.

It is sad to note that caste prejudices still prevail in some sections of the Christian community in India. Caste loyalties find expression specially during Church elections. This is a serious impediment to the church's efforts to carry on successfully its ministry of justice to the oppressed in the society. For within its own membership some are oppressed on the basis of caste. It is very disappointing that the women are yet to gain recognition in the Indian Church. Ordination of women is still a matter of controversy in some churches. Their membership on Church committees is still much limited. There is a great need to appreciate and encourage the contribution of women, in terms of actualising their gifts, to make the Indian Church a dynamic force for holistic peace in India.

(c) Society

The Indian society is now at cross-roads. Forces of secularism and communalism are at loggerheads with one another. The recent incidents in Ayodhya are indeed a threat to the secular character of the Indian polity. The sporadic events of communal violence in different parts of the country indicate the danger in store for the religious minorities in India. In a sense the Ayodhya episode is a case of injustice done to religious and cultural pluralism obtained in India.

Natural calamities claim several lives every year. The injustice done to nature has disturbed ecological balance. Human greed and consumerism are responsible for environmental degradation and ecological crisis. A clear sense of eco-justice is the need of the hour. Drug-addiction and alcoholism are a real threat to the Indian society today. Drug trafficking and its consequences for the youth is a matter of great concern for parents, educators and social workers. A sense of defeatism and frustration among the youth in view of the erosion of human values in the society, drives them to take refuge in drugs. Drug-addiction viewed in this perspective is the result of the injustice done to the aspirations of the youth in India. Alcoholism has brought distress and dislocation in many

families. Besides ill-health, many deaths are caused by the consumption of illicit liquor in villages and slums. Eventhough the government is aware of this problem it is unable to take stern measures, because some politicians are involved in this business. Women are much harrassed by their drunken husbands and other male members of the families.

Untouchability is a matter of great concern in India. In the rural areas beside every village comprising of high caste people there is a Harijan colony, where the workers drawn from lower castes live. These workers are not supposed to draw water from the well used by the high caste people in the village. Neither can they walk with slippers in the village. It is really the caste-class power structure which is responsible for this malaise. The larger issue involved in untouchability is that certain sections in India are treated as second class citizens in their own country. This is an injustice done to humanity itself. Caste feelings are present even among those who are well educated and well placed in life, because the hierarchical pattern of relationships typical of the feudal system in rural India, are implanted in the psyche or consciousness of the Indian masses. Eventhough many live in cities and towns the rural outlook which characterises India still remains in them.

In India attention needs to be focused also on the Tribals. Eventhough the government has given several concessions to the people in the hill areas, still there are some tribes which are unorganised to make their presence felt. They live on railway platforms and pavements, and among other things do hunting for their livelihood. Some tribals live in remote villages eating cats, rats and crows. Their existence in the contemporary society is indeed a sad story. They have withdrawn to the periphery of social life unable to compete with other sections in the Indian community. The plight of the untouchables mentioned above and the tribals is a clear indication that within India there are two countries—India of the rich and India of the poor. This raises many justice issues to be wrestled with.

III. Response of the churches through educational programmes

Churches in India do have educational programmes. These include Sunday School ministry, Youth Fellowship, Women's Fellowship and Men's Fellowship. There are also Vacation Bible Schools and confirmation classes held periodically. Some churches have produced their own curriculum material for Sunday Schools, Vacation Bible Schools and confirmation classes. Others use in their Sunday Schools the lessons prepared by the independent Christian education agencies such as, the India Sunday School Union, the Christian Education Department of the Evangelical Fellowship of India and the All India Sunday School Association.

In South India the Lutheran churches, Methodist Church in India, the Indian Orthodox Church, Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church, Marthoma Syrian Church and the Church of South India have well structured Christian Education materials for Sunday Schools. The Synod Department of Christian Education in the Church of South India was constituted two years ago, and the department among other things is producing Sunday School Lesson Series with the title 'WINGS OF FAITH'. It is hoped that the CSI Department of Christian Education would soon bring out curriculum material for youth and adult Christian education programmes in the rural and urban

areas, along with manuals for youth workers and Sunday School teachers training institutes. It is also desired that this Department produces Christian Education kit for the use of those who have not had any experience earlier, either as Sunday School teachers or youth or adult Christian education workers. In all the materials produced by the Department of Christian Education, specially starting from Intermediate lessons justice issues will be studied from different perspectives.

Among the Christian education agencies mentioned above, the All India Sunday School Association has 'Growing Together' series, wherein an attempt is made to bring about an awareness among children and youth on the injustices in the society and environmental hazards. The C.E.E.F.I. material contains much of the substance available in Gospel Light, Gospel Literature in National Tongues, Gospel Literature International, Hilfe Fur Bruder Tyndale House Foundation and the Moody Press publications in U.S.A. which does not wrestle with the issues of life and death confronted by the Indian people. The I.S.S.U. material published long ago does not address the contemporary problems and the contextual issues of today.

As far as the churches are concerned peace with justice is recognised as the prime need of the Indian society today. But in weaving the concerns of holistic peace in the subject matter of the Christian education material, only a few have taken concrete steps. The efforts of the Church of South India have been mentioned above. Recently the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India held a series of workshops at the Gurukul Theological College, Madras to reinterpret the Ten Commandments in the light of the Indian Church's concern for peace with justice. This is followed by efforts to produce orders of service reflecting on ecological and socio-economic issues challenging the Indian Church. (It was my privilege to have been associated with the U.E.L.C. in this venture.) The commentary on the Ten commandments will be used in Bible study groups and confirmation classes.

IV. Recommendation for the churches

The content oriented-classroom based conventional pattern of Christian Education is suitable for indoctrination, or transmission of Christian culture. Under that system the teachers used printed curriculum and certain teaching techniques, to produce a particular type of response or behaviour. The Sunday School programme was deemed to be successful when the children learned memory verses, songs, stories, dates, numbers and answered all the questions put to them by the teachers and parents, and maintained a level of morality in their daily living.

While this pattern has been very helpful to promote Christian ethics and Bible knowledge, it has not been helpful to shape the Church as a dynamic force for the establishment of Shalom. Because on the one hand not much theology was involved in the subject-matter of the lessons, (and even if there was theology, it was very simplistic or one that privatised religion) and the content communicated by the unintentional words, behaviour and facial expressions of the teachers and other adults—'Hidden Curriculum' (Ivan Illich)—was not viewed seriously. More often Sunday School teachers though they taught noble values and principles in the classes, they also transferred their prejudices, likes and dislikes to the children by their movements. Hence, in the practical situations at times many Christians are unwilling to support a just cause boldly, even though they are aware of it. The reason is many prejudices remain in their hearts, even though their heads think differently.

If the Sunday School and youth programmes should prepare the younger generation to take the side of peace with justice, the focus needs to be on the adults. The way in which the adult members of the Church, Sunday School teachers and youth workers and parents deal with issues of justice in a variety of situations (formal and informal) is a matter of great importance. Children internalise the patterns of behaviour of the adults whom they watch, and imitate. Hence, adult education programmes should be streamlined to shape the adults as appropriate role-models for children. When adults are sensitised on justice issues they will be able to nurture the style of life which befits Shalom among children and youth, in the families, Sunday Schools, youth fellowships and in the fellowship of the Church.

Further, in the efforts to build God's Kingdom on earth the method to be followed is not one where the adults lead the children and youth, but all work together. Viewed in this perspective, teacher-pupil relationship, parent-child relationship and Pastor-congregation relationship should become a partnership, rather than give and take relationship. Thus, the objective which is Shalom, transforms the processes too.

In the present set-up of following printed curriculum, it is necessary to re-do the content interpreting the Bible passages from a justice perspective. In the Indian context justice should mean empowering the powerless (they have been considered in section two). Sunday School classes and youth Bible study programmes should provide ample room for group interaction. For the children and youth must become a part of the story of God's liberating activity, as depicted in the Bible passages, and become one with the faith community in the Bible at least in spirit and temperament and reflect on the stories of the victims of unjust structures, with a view to consider what peace with justice would involve in each concrete situation. For that purpose they should be taken on exposure trips to villages, slums, rehabilitation centres and orphanages to feel with the suffering people. Only when they come to the Bible with such feelings they can understand God's strategy for justice in this world.

Books and programmes alone are not sufficient to nurture justice concerns among the Church members. The different foci of Shalom need to find expression frequently in the total life of the congregation. Baptism and Eucharist (sacraments) need to be interpreted in terms of God's reign and the new hope ushered to humanity for peace with justice in the ministry of Christ. Church festivals (Christmas and Easter) and seasons such as Advent and Lent, need to have special liturgies and programmes which bind the People of God with the struggles of the poor and exploited. Pulpit preaching and Bible-studies in women's, men's and youth groups, as well as cottage (Family) prayer meetings and confirmation classes need to explore the different areas of life where Shalom is already becoming a reality.

It is very important that a deliberate effort is made to discuss justice concerns in the context of domestic rituals too. In India puberty rites (justice to women), birthday parties (affirming all human beings) and house-warming ceremonies (the need for shelter and cohesive family relationships) are important occasions to do that. Only intentional efforts would develop perspectives with 'Prophetic Imagination' (Walter Bruggemann) for the establishment of an 'alternative community' envisioned in Shalom—Peace with Justice.

Situation in Germany

DR. JORG SCHNELLBACH, *General Secretary, E.M.S.*

In recent weeks serious disturbances have occurred in this country. There is an air of aggressiveness in some sections of the population which even has led to bloodshed. We are most alarmed and, at the same time, we are aware of an enormous challenge. We inform you with this letter about the situation and seek your solidarity in a spirit of Christian brotherhood and fellowship.

The Christian poet Jochen Klepper died together with his Jewish wife and daughter in their Berlin home 50 years ago on December 10th, 1942. The family committed suicide because of the persecution of Jews by the Nazi state. Six million Jews were murdered before the end of the war. The memory of this dreadful history is always alive among us.

Now newspapers report a great number of cases of violence against foreigners seeking asylum and refuge in Germany. There has been arson with loss of lives and heavy injuries. Jewish cemeteries have also been desecrated. All this has shocked the whole world and questions are being raised: does history repeat itself? Is the dreadful past being revived again and has the criminal energy of Nazi Germany not yet abated after almost 50 years of democracy?

The majority of people here abhor the recent excesses. We are shocked and deeply ashamed. Angry citizens demand an end to violence and hatred. Politicians warn against a resurgence of right wing activities and the Synods of the German churches have publicly expressed their grave concern and have called for Christian love and hospitality for those who have come here as refugees. Many citizens request that the state enforce the law relentlessly against groups of young people who are known to be right wing activities. Indeed, a high percentages of those involved in criminal acts have been caught already and will be tried in court. Statistics have shown that about 45 per cent of those detained are 14-17 years, 30 per cent 18-20 years old. It is frightening to see that teenagers are involved in such crimes! It is not a majority though that has taken to violence. But there is strong sentiment against foreigners in Germany among adults who seem to condone silently with anti-foreign actions—and this is of grave concern to all of us.

After the peaceful revolution without bloodshed in 1989, Germany was reunited. Many problems relating to reunification have not yet been solved: there is the breakdown of large parts of the industry in the former GDR, in consequence to this there is a high rate of unemployment, especially in the East of the country, young

people are disoriented and lack a clear vision as to their future.

At the same time, the numbers of asylum seekers from many countries have been steadily increasing month by month. There were more than 48,900 new arrivals by October 1992. Refugees from the war torn former Yugoslavia seek protection in this country, Sinti and Roma under pressure in Bulgaria flock into Germany as well as citizens of Eastern European nations presently in turmoil. People in Germany are getting restless about the growing numbers of refugees. Many come asking for asylum for political reasons, others arrive here because of the deep gap between the rich and the poor. The government has not been able to cope with the problems arising out of the German reunification, nor have the challenges been met which stem from the injustice in the world economic system and which are of global consequences.

Much of what is happening in our country is related to such root causes. Although the acts of violence come from a rightist section of the population, they are probably less politically motivated rather than socially conditioned. We have to be on the guard lest such sentiment might poison the political climate and eventually lead to a resurgence of nationalistic excesses which have caused death and destruction in Europe and the whole world in the past.

It is true, there are encouraging signs also. The majority of people is being stirred up at last out of their indifference and apathy. In many cities, hundreds of thousands have gathered together in demonstration against the upsurge of violence and in favour of tolerance and active support of refugees. Let us hope that such efforts will not be in vain.

We write this letter to you as we need your understanding and support in a crisis in which the lives of people are at stake, not only of those who are in distress and who come here from other nations seeking shelter and food. We feel that this crisis threatens our whole nation and, at the same time, has a great bearing far beyond Germany. Therefore, we turn to you and share with you our shame and our concern as we are members of the one Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. In pointing out briefly some of the root causes of the excesses we do not intend to belittle the detestable actions which have shaken the world and ourselves as well. We want you to know our dismay as you are our partners and we ask you for your understanding and for your prayers of intercession.

Israel's First Ambassador to India*

Statement by Ambassador Ephraim Doweik on the occasion of the Presentation of his Credentials on 26-11-1992 to his Excellency, The President of the Republic of India, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma.

Excellency :

It is with pride, emotion and profound motivation that I have the honour to present the letters of credence by which the President of the State of Israel, Mr. Haim Herzog, has accredited me as his personal envoy to your Excellency and as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of India.

I bring also to your Excellency and to all the communities, ethnicities and religions which compound the great and noble people of India, the warmest, heartiest greetings of President Herzog and of the people of Israel as well as their best wishes for the well-being, prosperity and happiness of your country. Indeed, our two nations, though totally different in size, population, background and traditions, have much in common and are in many ways bound by similar characteristics.

Both have attained in the wake of the Second World War, only half a century ago, independence and sovereign statehood, however both are ancient nations whose history, culture and belief go back to the very edges of human civilization. Both have brought the world many of the universal values which enlighten the spirit of mankind and steer human conscience to this very day. Both are Asian states whose roots are anchored very strongly in the good earth of Asia and whose history is intimately linked to the history of their sub-region. Both have been plagued, time and again, all along the centuries, by repeated invasions, massive destruction, exile and alien domination: however, both have withstood adversity with steadfastness and bravery and both have succeeded after a long struggle to free themselves from the heavy chains of colonialism and imperialism. Both have emerged from the abyss of colonial rule as staunch, genuine democracies whose main concern is the well-being of their citizens and where the political interaction is strictly within the rule of law. Both are peace loving nations for which human fraternity, international cooperation, good neighbourliness and fulfillment of obligations under inter-

national instruments are not abstract principles to which they only pay lip service but, indeed, binding commitments that guide them in their everyday steps. Both have been dragged against their will into recurring conflict, military confrontation and anti-terrorist struggle which have drained, and are still draining, much of their energy and resources. Both strive with the greatest earnest to break the vicious circle of hostility and dedicate all their strength and genius to the creation of a better society at the national, regional and international levels—a society where peace, stability and economic development shall prevail. Both extend their hand to all nations in a genuine spirit of brotherhood and friendship and refuse with determination to be detracted from their path.

Excellency, the extended hands of our two nations have finally met and after almost 45 years of estrangement, full diplomatic relations have been established between our two countries. Long existing under-currents of sympathy, admiration and mutual respect have burst into the open and are flooding away, rapidly, all past misunderstandings. The walls, which artificially separated us, have crumbled down and a new era in our relationship is taking-off under auspicious omens and in a particularly propitious international juncture. It is for us now, to catch up for the lost time, step up the peace of our interaction and lay down solid foundations on which we shall build, together, brick by brick, the bridges that shall unite our two nations in common goals and joint efforts for the mutual benefit of our two peoples.

In this respect a heavy responsibility lay upon the shoulders of the newly appointed Ambassadors in Tel Aviv and New Delhi. As for me, who have the unique privilege of being the first Israeli Ambassador to this great country, I shall pursue, relentlessly, this aim, explore every venue and open new paths. I shall do my best to establish a meaningful and frank dialogue between our two governments, increase mutual trust and deepen to the greatest extent our relations. I shall strive to develop, first and foremost, the human dimension of our relationship but, nevertheless, I shall not neglect the cultural, economic and development cooperation dimensions. I am very much aware, Excellency, that it will not be an easy task and that many difficulties lie ahead but I promise to do my utmost and I pray to God that I shall be able to meet the challenge.

* Israel's first ambassador to India Ephraim Doweik and Mrs. Sarah Doweik arrived in New Delhi on November 5, 1992.

Mr. Doweik presented his credentials to His Excellency the President of India, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma on November 26, Ambassador Doweik's statement on the occasion is reproduced below.

Before I conclude, allow me, Excellency to rest briefly on the latest developments in the Middle-East or as it is rightly called here, West Asia. Winds of change are blowing on the region, it is looking to the future in a world that wants peace and is firm in its determination to achieve it. The prospects of peace have never been better. The end of the Arab-Israeli conflict is no longer an utopian fantasy. It is within our grasp and we should seize with both hands this historic opportunity. For too long, the Middle-East has been caught up in national conflicts and national rivalries. We need to build a new Middle-East. We need to come to terms with new realities and work out in the coming months a comprehensive solution that will tackle all pending issues and bring, at long last, to all the peoples and countries of the region peace, peaceful coexistence and neighbourly cooperation. There is no room for timidity, reluctance or boycotts. Peace making should not be a hideaway operation. The various levels of the negotiating process should not be handcuffed one to the other. We should move ahead wherever possible and return when the time is ripe, to the tackling of problems that at this height seem impossible to solve. Let me assure you, Excellency that, whatever the price, Israel shall not allow itself or the other parties to forsake the chances

of peace. We shall proceed towards this sacred goal with determination, perseverance and creativity. We shall leave no stone unturned until we attain genuine lasting peace with our neighbours.

Let me add, Excellency, that we are particularly gratified that India has agreed to take an active part in the multi-lateral negotiations. India's wisdom, its wide international experience, its unwavering commitment to world peace as well as its privileged relationship with all parties concerned will, no doubt, be an important asset to the peace process as a whole. It will help not only to step up negotiations at the various levels but also contribute to bringing them to a favourable condition.

I would like, Excellency, to conclude on a personal note and reiterate my determination to do my utmost to strengthen, widen and deepen the friendly ties already existing between our two countries. I shall spare no effort to ensure that the hands of our two nations, which have now found each other, remain linked together in friendship, understanding, cooperation and mutual respect.

News from Israel

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Seminar on Communication for Development

The Communications Department of the Church of South India organised a seminar on the *Communication for Development* at Vijayawada, from 23rd to 26th of November. This seminar was sponsored by the CASA Madras. Mr. D. Mohan Gnana Dhas, an Asst. Training Officer from CASA was present and stayed throughout the seminar. 42 participants from the three states Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka took active part in it.

The Seminar was inaugurated by Rt. Rev. T. B. D. Prakasa Rao, Bishop of the Krishna and Godavari diocese, who, also, was present on all the days which was an quite encouraging factor. Bishop, explaining the importance of communication in human life, insisted that the Church should give priority to the communication and strengthen all aspects of it in order to keep abreast with the day to day affairs. Without proper communication, Bishop said, Church will be lagging behind and almost becomes ignorant about the things that are happening even within its own jurisdiction.

Mrs. Krupaveni Prakasarao, the Deputy Director of the Women and Child Welfare, directorate of the A.P., delivered the key-note address. Her emphasis was on the breakdown of communication between man and woman which is in a way responsible for all the ills of the society.

The two main papers were presented by Rev. Dass Babu and Mrs. Felicita Suma Bailey, Lecturer from Dharwad of Karnataka.

Mrs. Bailey's paper, *Priorities of Environmental Conservation* dealt with the ecological issues. Speaking about the dangerous situation arising out of the exploitation of nature she said, there should be a system of environmental governance based on rights and obligations at all levels from the globe to the nation and from the nation to the community for centuries man has been exploiting the nature and the environmental degradation is not an overnight occurrence and this destruction of nature has to be stopped at once. We have to communicate the fact that the extinction of one species sets off a chain reaction of annihilation of other species down the line, she pointed out. Preserving Bio-diversity should be one of the main items on the agenda of saving planet earth. Tropical forests that harbour some of the richest bio-diversity are under severe pressure. Many ecosystems have collapsed; water pollution has reached a new high—all these, she attributed, to the irresponsible attitude of people. Unchecked avarice and desperate poverty have made man negligent of a nature which gave him its bounty willingly. The onus of gratitude for this bounty lies heavily on each of us, she reminded, calling for better behaviour and communication for the eco-education of the masses.

Release, Restore and Reform, paper presented by Rev. Dass Babu, was the position paper. People are in bondage and they need release; people need to be restored from being mere objects to their role as subjects in society and society itself needs to be reformed from the acquired malice, if real development of society is aimed at.

The vision for which we are called to communicate is one of a just society, envisaged by peaceful means wherever possible. In our various human situations of conflict we have no excuse to draw back from our commitment to

social transformation and must remain committed to the people's struggles. Otherwise the desirable development will not take place and people remain groping in dark and under-developed; under-development is a new word for sin. Our response to the social transformation is part of our whole response to share the message of God's love in Jesus Christ. This should lead us to commit ourselves to the Mission of Liberation as proclaimed by Jesus at Nazareth or the so-called Nazareth Manifesto. Bringing to the fore the mis-conceptions, the author says, we have not yet fully claimed our freedom from the unbiblical dichotomies in which the religion of the powerful has trained us. So long we divide the material from the spiritual, he observes, the individual from the community and the 'this-worldly' from the 'other-worldly' it holds us back from the commitment to the mission of liberation given to us by Jesus.

Arising from the reality of the poor and the oppressed enmeshed within a complex web of social structures and relationships there is an urgent need for the communication of the Gospel of Liberation. This demands Christian communicator to play the prophetic role in the rapidly changing society.

Both the papers were well received and a lively discussion added to the fullness of the presentations.

Rev. B. J. J. Sundar Rao, the Director of the Suvatha Vani, spoke on the radio ministry which is aimed to transform the society.

There was a debate on the electronic media and its capacity to influence masses for social change. The personnel from FEBA contributed by highlighting the medium's impact on masses.

Mrs. Manjula Joel, the Producer of Suvatha Vani conducted the morning devotions. Mrs. R. Sakuntala Rao was the recording secretary. Mr. G. H. David Sundaram from Bellary; Rev. Babu Rao, Editor, Meadows, Madras; Mr. Alex, Social Worker, Vellore; Mr. S. Pradeep Kumar, High Court Advocate, Hyderabad, Mr. P.F.S. Rajan, Officer, Spencer, Secunderabad were the coordinators. Mr. K. G. Shekhar, the Secretary of the diocese helped in making arrangements for the seminar in the Bishop Azariah's Girls School compound.

Mr. Mohan Gnana Dhas introduced CASA and its commitment for the development of the down trodden, the poor and the needy. The communication Department thanks the Chief Zonal Officer, Mr. Joseph John and Mrs. Shiela Jones, the Project Officer for their financial assistance so graciously offered.

It was a rewarding experience to see that all the participants taking active part without any inhibitions. In fact almost all wrote either songs or essays on the subject which are of high quality and an audio cassette is under preparation which, again, a sign of a fruitful seminar.

Thanks to the officers of the Synod, particularly to the Moderator Dandin and the Treasurer for making funds available to organise the Seminar.

—DASS BABU, Director

NEWS FROM THE DIOCESES

MADRAS RURAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY

Since 1990, the Rural Development Ministry functioning under the Board of Socio-economic Concerns of CSI Diocese of Madras have new approach and vision covering the whole rural area consisting of 40 pastorates in the Diocese. The Rural Development Ministry is mainly focusing on rural people, educating, equipping and empowering them for wholistic development and liberation. The two major activities of Rural Development Ministry are :

1. Assisting the local pastorates on better farming practices and
2. education for liberation. It aims :
 - To educate and organise the Rural community towards greater awareness of their rights and resources as well as their responsibilities for their own growth and liberation in life.
 - To form, affiliate and promote towards self-realisation, self-respect and self-reliance.
 - To encourage oppressed community for active participation in the development process.
 - To train potential rural people for leadership practices and democratic action.
 - To assist development programs in agriculture animal husbandry, ecology, healthy family and community life.
 - To organise lectures, seminars, workshops and other mass education programs on matters and issues connected with rural development.
 - To promote people's solidarity for liberation.

Functions of Rural Development Ministry

Since Rural Development Ministry is under the umbrella of Board of Socio-economic Concerns of Diocese, this would enjoy its professional support and consultancy services for its ongoing activities provides facilities for training in various aspects and Fields. Also conscientising people, on the issues concerning children, youth, women, dalits and ecology and environment.

The Philosophy of Rural Development Ministry

The Rural Development Ministry seeks primarily to facilitate the transmission of knowledge and skills to the

rural poor and assist for a wholistic development of the community.

Services will be rendered specifically to the rural community not only in farming practices but more importantly in community education and organisation whereby the rural poor engaged in agriculture and allied activities could be equipped with skills to enable them to attain the goals of total community development. By providing community education programmes to development workers, animators and volunteers, it would enhance their commitment and upgrade skills for community service.

The Rural Development Ministry endeavours to strengthen environmentally sustainable and socially beneficial agricultural programmes which assist the weaker sections of the rural community. Rural people will be organised by systematic education to become sensitive to the issues of ecology and environment and formulate strategies for formation of a sound 'eco system'.

Besides the broad categories of farming and animal husbandry, there will be workshops and refresher courses on such subjects as rural industries, training for self-employment, co-operatives, appropriate technology, social forestry, water resources development and rural housing.

The Rural Development Ministry will also undertake socio-economic surveys, documentation and publication of educational materials for local consumption and action oriented research on dalit community issues pertinent to rural development.

Administration, Co-ordination and Implementation strategy

The bulkwork of the Rural Development Ministry has to do with the cultivable lands, available at Ikkadu, Roshanagaram, Chittakkadu, Melorsapuram, Madurantakam and Thiruninravur.

Assist the local pastors and local committees for better farming practices and yielding.

Find out the economic viability of local resources for income generation.

Monitor the regular payment of 50% of land cultivable income to the Diocese.

Achieve the target of full financial support to run the Programmes of Rural Development Ministry of the Diocese.

Rural Education for development and Liberation

Since the objectives are very much related to the vision for equipping the local congregation for mission (VELCOM) it strengthens the socially, economically, politically and culturally oppressed people at the grass root level.

The local resources should be identified along the ways and to tap the government resources to the needy community.

Stressing human and nature development and the idea of 'live together'.

- * Formation of village clusters in each area.
- * Two days training programme in each cluster for

Social analysis and identification of local needs and priorities.

- * Follow-up exchange of views and experiences, at the area level.
- * Promotion of action group for development and liberation.

For the successful conducting and achievement, the following agencies will assist Rural Development Ministry with the necessary resource material and expertise for the programmes.

- The ANITRA trust for Drought Management, waste land reclamation, dryland cultivation and Ecological issues.
- The Kattupakkam Agricultural Research Institute relating to farming practices, Animal Husbandry, Dairy Management, Social Forestry and other economic activities for the development of the rural poor.
- The Dalit Education facilitation centre for help to conduct workshops and seminars on dalit issues and problems.
- The CSI-CTVT for training inputs on Non-formal Education, Vocational Guidance, Skill Development for self-employment.

Y. JOHN MANOGARAN,
Co-ordinator,

Rural Development Ministry.

KANYAKUMARI DIOCESE

THANKSGIVING TURNS TO BE RELIEF GIVING

November 14, 1992 was a day of mixed feelings to the Christians of Kanyakumari district. The cyclone on the 13th and the subsequent downpour resulting in heavy flood rendered thousands homeless. The Government fixes the damage at 19,000 houses, in addition to the cattle and the crop. In the meantime, Kanyakumari diocese was preparing to celebrate the 33rd Thanksgiving day on the 14th and the day following.

With grief, Rt. Rev. Christudhas, the Bishop, the clergy and the people participated the Thanksgiving service on the 15th Sunday at the Home church, Nagercoil. The Rt. Rev. Dr. Samuel Amirtham preached the Lord's message. Earlier a children's service was conducted by the youth department. Connected with the celebrations, various competitions and cultural programmes were held. The Bishop laid the foundation stone for the Diocesan Community Hall. The previous day, an exhibition depicting various activities of the diocese and a public reception were held.

The very next day, the whole diocese plunged into relief operation. The Bishop visited all the affected places and consoled the people. The local churches contributed generously for the relief of the flood victims. Relief was given to all irrespective of caste, creed or community. About 10 lakh worth relief materials were distributed. The district collector hailed the service of the diocese. The Synod Relief Committee and the CASA also shared resources for the relief work.

Thus the day of Thanksgiving turned to be a day of Relief giving.

REV. G. DEVAKATAKSHAM
Correspondent.

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NEWS from All Over

INDIA : FIRST INTER RELIGIOUS DISCUSSION OF THE PLIGHT OF DALITS

Over one hundred representatives of Dalit communities from all over India met late December in Nagpur to consider future planning for the Dalit Solidarity Programme of the Geneva-based World Council of Churches. The Dalit community, rejected and treated as untouchable, has persistently called for justice and the recognition of their plight within Indian society.

The venue, Nagpur, offered a possibility of encounter with an important aspect in the modern history of the Dalits. Following the example of the Indian statesman and Dalit leader, Babasaheb Ambedkar, Dalits in the state of Maharashtra converted on 14 October 1956 by the thousands from Hinduism to Buddhism, in order to embrace, as they said, 'a religion in which there is no distinction between man and man'.

The presence of Buddhist Dalits was therefore particularly significant in this first inter-religious gathering of Dalits, which also included Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus and Christians. The meeting was held against the background of the present turmoil in India, following the recent destruction of the Babri Masjid Mosque in Ayodhya.

The Dalit Solidarity Programme enjoys the support of the Indian churches but remains an inter-religious thrust of the World Council of Churches following the recommendations of the Seventh Assembly (in Canberra/Australia, 7-20 February 1991). The plight of Dalits knows no religious boundaries and echoes the concern of the Council to create space for a cooperation with people of other faiths towards justice, peace and human dignity. As people suffering the same pains, the Dalits in Nagpur manifested their resolve not to be separated from each other in their common struggle against oppression and humiliation. The common witness and commitment of Dalits from various religious traditions gave additional emphasis and a significant dimension to the mandate of the Office on Interreligious Relations of the WCC : to make interreligious dialogue a tool in the search for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

The meeting heard reports that the churches in India have committed themselves to support the Dalit Solidarity Programme lodged within the WCC Programme to Combat Racism and are seriously considering their own programmes and projects.

The meeting agreed on a number of priorities for the initial stage of the programme. These include networking among minority and sub-caste groups at the regional level ; education in schools, colleges, villages and urban areas ; strengthening ties with the tribal people of India, who along with the Dalit community make up the indigenous population of the country ; and helping to raise international public opinion about the Dalit struggle.

Bhagwan Das, a Buddhist lawyer from Delhi, was elected chairperson of the ongoing working group of the Dalit Solidarity Programme in India. In his closing remarks at the meeting Das said : ' This has been a historic

meeting. We have done something which has never happened before in the Dalit community, coming together from the different religious traditions to establish our oneness in the struggle and proceed with practical steps together.' (EPS)

CHRISTIANS PROTEST AGAINST DISCRIMINATORY LAWS IN PAKISTAN

On 13 October, the Government of Pakistan took the decision to insert a religion column in the national identity cards. The decision was made under pressure from the Islamic fundamentalist lobby that threatened to surround the Parliament if the demand of a separate column for religious minorities in the national identity cards was not accepted.

The government's decision viewed as being discriminatory by the religious minorities comes in wake of an increase in incidences of victimisation and oppression of minorities in the country. Earlier this year in January, Naemat Ahmar, a Christian teacher and a poet was brutally murdered by a young muslim fanatic on the basis of rumours that he insulted Holy Prophet Mohammed. The incident is a result of the ' Blasphemy Law ' introduced and promoted by the government as an indication of its commitment to Islam. The ' Blasphemy Law ' introduced in 1986 at the behest of the Islamic fundamentalists reads as under :

' Use of derogatory remark etc., in respect of the Holy prophet : Whoever by words either spoken or written, or by visible representation, or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) shall be punished with death or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine.'

Apart from Naemat Ahmar's case which attracted international media attention there have been other cases as well where Christians were made targets of the blasphemy law by muslim fanatics and others motivated by political considerations. The present air of religious intolerance in Pakistan received impetus and encouragement during 11 years of the late General Zia's rule. It continues to flourish in the emotionally charged atmosphere in the country, thanks largely to the leaders of the numerous religious and sectarian parties that have cropped up all over.

Speaking on the issue of religion column in the national identity card, Maulana Abdul Sattar Khan Miazai, the Federal Religious Affairs Minister and President of the Jamait Ulema-i-Pakistan, an Islamic fundamentalist party said those demanding deletion of the religion column were in fact trying to undo Pakistan. And went on to add that the insertion of the column was a Constitutional requirement. The Minister, disagreed with those who thought the government's decision will divide the nation.

The Christian community which in the past remained indifferent to various discriminatory and oppressive measures taken by the government is now in the forefront of the protest movement against the insertion of religion

column in national identity cards. A joint statement issued by the Bishops of the Church of Pakistan and the Roman Catholic Church on 10 November, called upon Government of Pakistan to rescind its decision to include the column of religion in the national identity card.

Christian community is not alone in voicing concern at the introduction of discriminatory measures. The provincial government of Sind has passed a resolution against the Federal government's decision. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, other NGO's, and intellectuals have also condemned the government's decision. Dr. Iqbal Ahmed an international expert on Middle-East and Islam speaking at a seminar in Lahore challenged those demanding a religion column to show him—'where it is in the Quran'. Others argued that the government decision will lead to social discrimination of the minorities and will reduce their status to second class citizens.

The Christian leaders in the country have drawn attention of the government to the assurance given to the minorities by the Father of the Nation, Mohammed Ali Jinnah while addressing the first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on 11 August 1947. He said :

'You are free, you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or any other place of worship in this state of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion caste or creed, that has nothing to do with the business of the state. We are starting in the days when there is no discrimination, no distinction between one community and other, no discrimination between caste or creed or another. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one state.'

It is high time that issues such as these are addressed with greater sensitivity in order to maintain peace and unity, which is so fragile in the country.

CLEMENT JOHN

WOMEN PROTEST OVER DOWRY

Nearly 5 000—Bangladeshi women—homeless, jobless or divorced—staged a noisy rally in Dhaka demanding government action to curb the dowry system, create jobs and ensure welfare payments. Many women travelled from outlying areas for the rally organised by the Bangladesh Women Peasants Association. Many cradled children on their laps. Some tied themselves to others for fear of getting separated in the crowd.

The women gathered outside the government secretariat on the previous day and slept overnight on the street. They agreed to leave on the following day after police let them hand over a memorandum containing their demands to Prime Minister Begum Khalieda Zia.

These include equal rights for them in social and domestic affairs, jobs or unemployment allowances lower prices for essential goods, land for the landless and enforcement of laws to curb down dowry payments, rape, murder and polygamy.

Recent studies by the Bangladesh Women's Association show that more than half of the average 10,000 women divorced every year, are victims of the dowry system.

(SAARC LINK)

CHINA CHURCH LEADERS' VISIT ENCOURAGES MORE EXCHANGES IN FUTURE

HONG KONG (AENS)—A visit of church leaders of China to Hong Kong has stirred enthusiasm among Hong Kong Christians to see for themselves what is happening in the mainland.

The China delegation, led by Bishop K. H. Ting, the president of the China Christian Council (CCC) and chairperson of the National Three-Self Patriotic Committee, was in the territory at the invitation of the Hong Kong Christian Council from November 24 to December 1.

Interest in the situation of the church in China grew after a whole-day gathering to give Hong Kong Christians the chance to dialogue with China church leaders. More than 250 Hong Kong Christians, many of them church leaders attended the dialogue held on November 27. The dialogue was highlighted by situationers from the China delegation.

Bishop Ting gave a report on the Fifth National Christian Conference. He also explained the general situation of the church in China today and the difficulties the church is facing. Bishop Shen Yi-fan, general secretary of the CCC, discussed the church in China's administration, training and church order and the constitution and its implementation. CCC vice-president Mr. Luo Guan-zong examined the Chinese government's religious policy from the perspective of the church while Nanjing seminarian Ms Ye Xiao-lian spoke about her experience as a grass root church worker.

'For me it was an eye-opening experience because they spoke on these issues very frankly and honestly. They mentioned their difficulties as well as their hopes and aspirations,' HKCC general secretary Dr. Tso Man King said after the dialogue.

According to Dr. Tso, many churches, seminaries and Christian organisations are making proposals to see whether they can send delegates to visit China.

Bishop K. H. Ting welcomed the interest of the Hong Kong Christians. 'These visits teach us something about the universality of the church. That is important after talking about ourselves-self-government, self-support, self-propagation-for so many years,' he stated in an interview broadcast over the Hong Kong programme *Sunday Magazine*.

On the same programme he said : 'We are very aware of the fact that for the past years the church of China have been in the prayers of many Christians outside of China including Hong Kong. We want these Christians to know that God has listened to their prayers so that in spite of every thing the church has grown, the witness to Christ is being carried on and worship and adoration of God is being continued and for all these things we are thankful.'

The rapid growth of the church in China was a source of wonder and inspiration for Hong Kong Christians. Bishop Ting said that in the last 12 years churches grew at the rate of three churches every two days. Today there are some 8,000 church buildings and tens of thousands of Christian groups meeting in houses.

The visit is only the second visit by a national delegation of China church leaders. The first visit was in 1981 after the reopening of churches in China in 1979.

(AENS)

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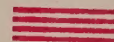
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